

Monthly Message from the Chief

There was recently a change of leadership in the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), the agency to which CAL FIRE reports. Former Secretary, Mike Chrisman, accepted the position of Director, Southwest Partnership Office of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Governor Schwarzenegger appointed Lester Snow, formerly the Director of the Department of Water Resources, as the new Secretary on February 1, 2010.



Secretary Snow is very aware of the broad spectrum of responsibilities he has assumed for all natural resource interests in the state. He is clear about his intent to pursue solutions in a collaborative manner and encourages all directors to leverage their resources in concert to achieve common objectives.

This echoes the philosophies I have expressed regarding the interactions of programs within our department, so you can imagine how pleased I was to hear this direction. It also caused me to reminisce about how little I knew of CAL FIRE's fit into the larger scheme of state government for the better part of my career. While I have participated in many discussions regarding the appropriateness of fire protection and forestry being conjoined in a single department, I recall relatively little discussion of our place in the Agency.

Our mission is to serve and safeguard the people and protect the property and natural resources of California. Everything we do may be tracked back to that mission, including the services we provide through our Cooperative Fire Protection Program contracts...a subject I will expand on in greater detail in a future message.

How the State Responsibility Area we protect is determined ultimately depends on forest, watershed and range values of lands (see *PRC 4126* <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate?WAISdocID=62334012740+1+0+0&WAIAction=retrieve>), not necessarily how many structures there are per acre, as many believe. Preventing and controlling unwanted fires along with protecting and improving the State's forests, watersheds and rangelands for a variety of uses is inextricably tied to water. Although I like to think that public safety is the number one concern of Californians, take away or significantly diminish the quality of our water and see what happens. Now, ponder the importance of our linkage to protecting it.

Who knows how many departments there are in the CNRA? There are nine departments: CALFED Bay-Delta Program, California Conservation Corps, Department of Boating and Waterways, Department of Conservation,

Department of Fish and Game, Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Resource, Recovery and Recycling and Department of Water Resources. To learn more, see <http://resources.ca.gov/departments.html>. There are also 16 boards and commissions, including the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection. I won't list them, but you can learn more about them at http://resources.ca.gov/boards_and_commissions.html.

Speaking of the Board, I have found there is a fair amount of confusion regarding the Department's relationship to the Board. The Board's mission is to lead California in developing policies and programs that serve the public interest in environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable management of forest and rangelands, and a fire protection system that protects and serves the people of the state. Although there is no direct line of authority between the two, the Department implements and enforces those policies and programs. The makeup of the Board - three from the forest products industry, one representing range livestock interests and five from the general public - provides for a spectrum of interests to be represented as policy is developed. The Department currently enjoys a close and cooperative relationship with the Board.

More information about the Board is available at <http://www.bof.fire.ca.gov/>.

Bottom line is that I believe CAL FIRE serves the people of California well positioned as it is within the State's governance structure, and our allegiances with other entities charged with protecting the state's natural resources strengthen our ability to provide public safety services.



Del Walters, Chief
Director